



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## A REVALUATION OF EARLY PERUVIAN HISTORY

In the eyes of the general public, Bancroft and Prescott have said the last word on the history of this Continent, North and South. With the majority of non-Catholic readers their judgment is final; all the more so, because it is always decently averse to Catholic institutions and persons. As a result Catholic historical research comes almost to naught unless it also finally reaches the ear of the people. Against Bancroft's misrepresentations Catholics have an antidote in their own historians; in the case of Prescott, they are mostly without recourse, having nothing equally good to oppose to his disfigurement of Catholic Spanish-American history. The latter's work covers too extensive a field to be reviewed here in extenso. But I propose briefly to reëxamine Prescott's treatment of the principal personages connected with the Conquest and the christianization of Peru, and to suggest at the same time the manner in which this subject should be approached anew in the light of modern criticism. The latter work is chosen because it represents the mature outcome of the author's historical endeavors, and because, for sheer audacity of enterprise and felicitous results, the men connected with it overtower anything the New World can boast of.

The winning of Peru and the rapid christianization and civilization of the autochthonous population form one of the most wonderful pages in the Catholic annals of this continent. If we contrast, moreover, the ways and achievements of the Spanish *Conquistadores* with those of their Anglo-Saxon contemporaries in the North, the Catholic cavalier of Castile loses nothing by the comparison. While obloquy has been heaped on the latter, and while fulsome praise has been bestowed on the former, present-day historical investigation is quite ready to reverse the judgment of ill-informed or biased writers. The ideals of the Middle Ages had not yet passed away, when the New World loomed up dimly on the western horizon. Medieval civilization was essentially Catholic in character. In order to present them in their true light, the bold discoverers who made Spain of the sixteenth century famous, should be studied as part of the civilization that was their very existence. Prescott has strangely over-

stated and misstated the motives that prompted them to almost superhuman endeavors:

“Gold was the incentive and the recompense of the Spanish conqueror and in the pursuit of it his inflexible nature rarely hesitated as to the means. His courage was sullied with cruelty, the cruelty that flowed equally—strange as it may seem—from his avarice and his religion; religion as it was understood in that age—the religion of the Crusader. It was the convenient cloak for a multitude of sins, which covered them even from himself. The Castilian, too proud for hypocrisy, committed more cruelties in the name of religion than were ever practiced by the pagan idolator or the fanatical Moslem. The burning of the infidel was a sacrifice acceptable to Heaven, and the conversion of those who survived amply atoned for the foulest offenses.”<sup>1</sup>

Referring to this subject, a Peruvian historian of note, E. Larrabure y Unanue, has written: “It is a fact not sufficiently understood that it was not only the thirst of gold, but also the love of glory and patriotism which were the prime movers that animated Nuñez de Balboa, as well as the sympathetic Hernando Cortez, Francisco Pizarro, Almagro, Juan de la Torre and many others. And it is now time that we should be just, without inclining the balance more to one side than to the other.”<sup>2</sup> The picture as drawn by Prescott is dark enough, especially when these Catholics of southern Europe are contrasted with the Protestant Anglo-Saxon races that scattered themselves over the great northern division of this western hemisphere. “For the principle of action with these latter was not avarice, nor the more specious pretext of proselytism, but independence—independence religious and political. To secure this, they were content to earn a bare subsistence by a life of frugality and toil. They asked nothing from the soil, but a reasonable return of their own labor. No golden visions threw a deceitful halo around their path, and beckoned them onwards through seas of blood to the subversion of an offending dynasty.”<sup>3</sup> Yet the imperial history testifies that these same colonists practised or were party to similar, if not greater, cruelties on the northern Indian and especially on the Negro. While Rome and Madrid took the southern Indians under their protection, the hapless African had no rights and no recourse against the caprices

---

<sup>1</sup> *Conquest of Peru*, Vol. i, p. 189, Phila., 1892.

<sup>2</sup> *Monografías Historico-Americanas*, p. 407. Lima, 1893.

<sup>3</sup> *Conquest of Peru*, loc. cit.

of irresponsible power. John Hawkins, the first Englishman to take part in their nefarious traffic in human flesh, was knighted by Elizabeth for his achievements, which consisted largely in "burning and spoiling" the towns of the natives of Guinea. The English Parliament, far from protecting the black men, encouraged the slave trade. In the century preceding its prohibition by the American Congress in 1776, the number of negroes imported by the English alone into Spanish, French and English colonies, on the lowest computation, was little less than three millions; and we must add more than a quarter of a million, who perished on the voyage, and whose bodies were thrown into the Atlantic. These figures, as Lecky well observes, are in themselves sufficiently eloquent. We have here almost as many negroes ruthlessly torn from their homes and sold into a helpless, abject, and crushing servitude, as there were Indians in the whole of the present territory of Peru at the time of the Spanish conquest.<sup>4</sup> The contrast is illuminating, since it gives us an insight into the mentality which ruled Prescott in the composition of his history. He may not exhibit the downright Protestant frenzy of a Kingsley, but he shows himself totally incapable of grasping either the inner soul of the men who pass across his pages, or the deep, noble tendencies and influences which animated them in their gigantic undertakings. When he notices them at all, it is always with a covert sneer. Their success or failure as adventurers interests him above all, while he is often indifferent to the laws and institutions of which they were the moving spirits and by which posterity must judge them. And in this light the contrast between the Anglo-Saxon and Castilian conqueror and colonizer is greatly in favor of the latter.

Prescott is indeed less an historian than a dramatic narrator of picturesque events. He has delved into the old chroniclers only for a thread to connect them, after the fashion of the novelist. With this thread for a guide, he weaves into his narrative those events which appeal mostly to his fancy; and he makes deft use of only those quotations—very freely translated, abbreviated or expanded—which keep alive the reader's interest in his panoramic display, while it moves to its dramatic climax. He is so completely

---

<sup>4</sup> LECKY, *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. ii, pp. 242ss. New York, 1892.

fascinated by the *Historiadores Primitivos*, that he is little disposed to control their utterances or to challenge the reputation they have given their heroes. He completely fails to appreciate the sense of the supernatural which gripped the very souls of the *Conquistadores*. The principal personage in the conquest of Peru, Francisco Pizarro—although “a son of sin and sorrow”—was not the base and mercenary character so frequently depicted. He and his companions did desire gold, and under the circumstances it could not have been otherwise; but they also recognized that high above gold there was a sphere in which man ennoble himself by serving God and his fellowmen. They thirsted for glory; but they desired to secure it by propagating the religion of Christ which their fatherland, notwithstanding all its weaknesses, loved with an ardor that has never been surpassed. They were first and foremost crusaders of the Faith, the Faith which, as Lope de Vega beautifully expresses it, gave—

*Al Rey infinitas tierras,  
Y a Dios infinitas almas.*

The supernatural was to them the most living of realities, and any historian who fails to grasp that fact, fails also to understand what is best and greatest in them. He lacks the supreme norm by which to judge their lives and actions. Religion entered not only into the theory of the Spanish conquest of the New World, but it furnishes the key to the American crusades, as is evident from their origin, from the sanction openly given to them by the Pope, from the throng of devoted missionaries who followed in the track of the conquerors to garner the rich harvest of souls, as well as from the reiterated instructions of the crown, the great object of which was the conversion of the natives.

A few extracts from the original contemporary documents, unadorned by any comments from extraneous sources, furnish unimpeachable evidence to this effect. The contract between Francisco Pizarro, Diego de Almagro, and Fernando de Luque, which was entered into in the city of Panama in 1526, and which served as the basis for the expedition to Peru, begins as follows: *In the Name of the Most Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three distinct persons and one true God, and of Our Lady the Most Blessed Virgin.* . . . And, after describing in detail the

share each of the partners was to contribute to the enterprise and the share each was to receive from its successful termination, the document continues:

“And to give greater force to their promise that they would comply with all things set down in this document, they took God Our Lord to witness and made their oath on the Holy Gospels, touching them with their hands. And the captain Francisco Pizarro and Diego de Almagro traced the sign of the cross with their own hand, reiterating that they would live up to and comply with everything entered into by this company and agreed upon in this writing under pain of passing as bad and infamous Christians.”

The expedition, which had now started southwards from Panama, was almost wrecked for lack of men and means; and with but thirteen followers left, Pizarro landed on the little island of Gorgona. While waiting for further reinforcements, the commander and his soldiers said their morning prayers every day; in the evening they recited the *Salve Regina* and other prayers; they observed the feast days, and kept Fridays and Sundays, as the old chronicles tell us. Some time later, when Pizarro appeared in the bay of Tumbez, an Inca noble came to visit him, inquiring of him whence and why he had come to these shores. The commander replied “that he had come in the name of his Emperor to rescue the inhabitants from the darkness of unbelief in which they were now living. They worshiped an evil spirit who would bring their souls to everlasting perdition, but he would give them the knowledge of the true and only God, Jesus Christ, to believe in Whom was eternal salvation.”

In the justly famous *Capitulacion* executed by the Queen of Spain at Toledo, July 26, 1529, in favor of Francisco Pizarro, it is declared in the clearest and most incontrovertible terms:

“It is our pleasure taking into account the good life and doctrine of Don Fernando de Luque, to present him to our Most Holy Father for the Bishopric of Tumbez in the province and government of Peru . . . and while awaiting the arrival of the bulls for the said Bishopric, we appoint him as general protector of all the Indians of that province. . . . When you set out from our kingdom for the provinces of Peru, you will reserve passage on your vessels . . . for all those religious and ecclesiastical persons appointed by us to instruct the Indian inhabitants in our Catholic faith. And you will obtain their advice in the conquest, exploration, and settlement of the country, and you will do nothing without consulting them.”

When Pizarro finally set out from Panama on his third and most successful voyage, these regulations were faithfully carried out. Five religious accompanied him; and, as befitted true crusaders of the faith, the event was duly signaled by an imposing religious celebration.

“The banner and the royal standard were blessed in the Cathedral of Panama on the feast of St. John the Evangelist, A. D. 1530. All the soldiers confessed and communicated in the Convent of Our Lady of Mercy, on the feast of the Holy Innocents, at a High Mass celebrated with all solemnity. The sermon was preached by Fray Juan de Vargas, one of the five religious who, in obedience to their superior and the orders of the Emperor, accompanied the soldiers of the Conquest.”

On his progress through the country, the commander issued a proclamation to all the natives with whom he came into contact, “that he had been sent by his Majesty the Emperor to the Indians to bring them to the knowledge of the Holy Catholic Faith, and to require them to submit peacefully to the Apostolic Church of Rome. . . .” When he founded his first colony, San Miguel, some thirty leagues south of Tumbez, where he had first landed, and public buildings began to be erected, the church was among the first to rise. At the same time several natives were assigned to each colonist to assist him in his labors and moreover in order that “the Christian might teach them our Holy Faith in conformity with the orders of his Majesty.” The small army faced the most arduous task of all—the passage of the Andes; and even the lust of gold which had been so often held up as the prime object of the conquerors, made the stoutest hearts quail before the unknown perils that were ahead. Pizarro had but to appeal to their religious convictions and to remind them of the main purpose of the expedition: the spread of the true Faith, in order to reanimate them with a renewed and even greater purpose:

“Let all take courage and comport yourselves as I expect you to do. Exert yourselves as faithful sons of Spain have always done. Fear not the great multitude of people opposed to the small force of Christians. Even if there were fewer of us and our opponents were more numerous than they are, the help of God is all-powerful. He never abandons his own in their extremity, and He will now assist us to overcome and humble the proud infidels and bring them to the knowledge of our Holy Catholic Faith.”

When they were finally in presence of Atahualpa, the Inca, Father Vincente de Valverde, the Dominican chaplain of the expedition, who afterwards became Bishop of Cuzco, reiterated and amplified the purpose of the expedition, as also did Pizarro when the Inca was a captive in his power. The deepest conviction and sincerity are evident in these different professions of their supreme purpose. This again, when Hernando Pizzaro, brother of the conqueror, had been despatched by his chief on an expedition to Pachacamac, with its temple famed all over the country for the oracles delivered from its dark and mysterious shrine—an American Delphi indeed—and after he had forced his way into the sacred edifice, Prescott himself, on describing what ensued, cannot withhold his admiration for the conduct of the fervent Catholic cavalier:

“Tearing the idol from its recess, the indignant Spaniards dragged it into the open air, and there broke it into a hundred fragments. The place was then purified, and a large cross, made of stone and plaster, was erected on the spot. In a few years the walls of the temple were pulled down by the Spanish settlers, who found there a convenient quarry for their own edifices. But the cross still remained, spreading its broad arms over the ruins. It stood where it was planted, in the very heart of the stronghold of Heathendom; and, while all was in ruins around it, proclaimed the permanent triumphs of the Faith. The simple natives, finding that Heaven had no bolts in store for the Conquerors, and that their god had no power to prevent the profanation of his shrine, came in gradually and tendered their homage to the strangers, whom they now regarded with feelings of superstitious awe. Pizarro profited by this temper to wean them, if possible, from their idolatry; and though no preacher himself, as he tells us, he delivered a discourse, explaining to them that they lived in a false religion. In conclusion he taught them the sign of the cross, as an inestimable talisman to secure them against the machinations of the Devil.”<sup>5</sup>

No sooner had Cuzco, the Rome of the Inca empire, been taken by the Spaniards, who now felt themselves complete masters of the country, than they set about with method and perseverance to carry out their plans for the conversion and civilization of the Indians. In the *Capitulacion* referred to above, Pizarro had been required to bring out with him a certain number of priests in his own vessels. Every succeeding vessel brought

---

<sup>5</sup> *L. c.*, Vol. i, p. 396.



an additional number of ecclesiastics. And Prescott pays a grudging and therefore all the more valuable a tribute to their labors:

“They were, many of them, men of singular humility who followed in the track of the conqueror to scatter the seeds of spiritual truth, and, with disinterested zeal devoted themselves to the propagation of the Gospel. Thus did their pious labors prove them the true soldiers of the Cross, and showed that the object so ostentatiously avowed of carrying its banner among the heather nations, was not an empty vaunt.”<sup>6</sup>

This ceaseless effort to christianize the heathen is the most honorable characteristic of the Spanish conquest. The Puritan, with equal religious zeal, did comparatively little for the conversion of the Indian—content, as it would seem, with having secured to himself the inestimable privilege of worshipping God in his own way. Other adventurers, who have occupied the New World, have often had too little regard for religion themselves, to be very solicitous about spreading it among the savages. But from first to last the Spanish conqueror exhibited a keen interest in the spiritual welfare of the natives. Under his auspices, churches were erected on a magnificent scale. Schools for elementary instruction were founded and every rational means was taken to spread the knowledge of religious truth. Almost before the viceroys were aware of it, the missionaries had carried the Gospel into remote and almost inaccessible regions, and had gathered their Indian disciples into communities in order to teach them not only the truths of religion, but also the useful arts of civilized life. At all times the courageous ecclesiastic was ready to lift his voice against the cruelty of certain successful adventurers or against the cupidity of certain powerful colonists. When his remonstrances proved unavailing, as they sometimes did, he still followed to bind up the wounds of his flock, to teach the poor Indian resignation under his lot, and to enlighten his dimmed intellect with the revelation of a holier and happier existence in the next world. The Spanish conqueror welcomed him, and seconded him in all his efforts to perform his work of beneficence and to spread the light of civilization over the farthest regions of the New World. The same spirit animated both, and it became stronger in every crisis. There is no need to

---

<sup>6</sup> *L. c.*, Vol. i, p. 321.

multiply testimonies to this. It suffices to add the words of an old chronicler, who in describing the assassination of Francisco Pizarro, "the Spanish Julius Caesar," as he not inaptly called him: "His traitorous enemies overpowered him and dealt him cruel blows. The Spanish Julius Caesar fell overcome by his wounds. While asking for a confessor and making an act of contrition, he traced the sign of the Cross with his blood and expired." It was a death altogether worthy of the man who, when he founded his new capital, Lima, proclaimed that it was to be founded "en Dios, y por Dios y en su Nombre."

No true historical record can deny that these Spanish empire-builders were cast in the heroic mould of the Catholic Faith. With such convictions to animate them, it is not surprising that civilization and learning should have spread so quickly over all the country they had conquered, and so much more rapidly than in any other part of the North American continent under Anglo-Saxon influence. The Cathedrals of Cuzco and Lima are, in size, appointments and artistic value, superior to any church in the western Hemisphere, Mexico alone excepted. Sanctity and learning kept pace with material progress. St. Rose of Lima and St. Turibius bear testimony to the former, while the founding of the University of San Marcos in Lima bears testimony to the latter. It is the oldest University of the New World, dating from 1551, fifty-six years before the English settlers landed in Jamestown, fifty-eight years before Hudson sailed into the Bay of New York, sixty-nine years before the *Mayflower* touched the shores of New England. By virtue of its charter, it enjoyed all the privileges of the University of Salamanca, which was then one of the most noted seats of learning in Europe. Indeed almost immediately after the conquest and for generations to come, Lima was the center of learning and culture in South America.

I am aware that this sketch of the Spaniard in early Peru does not accord with the view taken of him by many modern historians. But if, in the words of Joseph De Maistre, history has often been a conspiracy against the truth, it has been so particularly in the case of South America. It is not too much to say that the early history of Peru remains to be retold, and that it can be told as it deserves only by a Catholic. There have been excesses, and there is no need to rehearse them here; Protestant historians,

to whom we have left the task, have done that with a vengeance. No character is drawn in darker colors by Prescott than that of the saintly Father Valverde, Pizarro's chaplain, and the first Bishop of Cuzco. At the capture of the Inca Atahualpa in Caxamalca, at his condemnation to death and his execution, he is represented as "a bigoted prelate with a heart so seared by fanaticism as to be closed against sympathy with the unfortunate natives." His biography remains to be written for English readers, and an unbiased reexamination of the records will reveal an altogether different character. Their reexamination is urgently needed, not only in his case, but in the case of many others who shared in the conquest of Peru and in the important events immediately subsequent to it. Not only Americanists, but above all students of American Catholic history, need now more than ever a critical, annotated collection of the "Historians of Peru." The better known chroniclers of the Conquest deserve to be reedited with all the critical apparatus now at our disposal, and sources thus far untouched will yield an abundance of new and surprising material on this subject. The public library of Lima and that of the University of San Marcos contain a wealth of manuscripts practically unknown and yet of the greatest value to the historian. The same holds true of Spanish libraries and those of its various religious orders, especially those of the Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians and Jesuits. Right at home we have the Widener collection at Harvard, recently enriched by six hundred volumes, the gift of Edwin V. Morgan. This rich mine of South American lore ought to be worked by competent Catholic investigators.

Peru was the center from which religion and civilization radiated practically all over South America, during the time that one discovery after another was made by the men who first set foot on its soil. For lack of documents, often existing but unknown, their services have not always received due recognition, and credit has unjustly been given to government agents and representatives of learned societies who have done their work only in the last hundred years.

It may easily be seen that in this particular field, very much still remains to be done by the Catholic historian. The history of the ever interesting land of Peru has barely been outlined, and has generally been presented in a false perspective. Only patient *Kleinarbeit* among the manuscripts, both those known

and those still unpublished, can give us a true recital of the facts; and there is no doubt that when this task has been thoroughy done, it will compel a readjustment of values in the history of Peru. Then the Catholic cavalier and the Catholic missionary, who were ever in the forefront of every great enterprise, will finally come into their own.

J. B. CULEMANS, Ph.D.,  
*Moline, Ill.*